

Message Text

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SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 /094 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7879

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

ACONSUL CALCUTTA 033

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 04628

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, XO, IN, FR

SUBJECT: CHIRAC VISIT TO INDIA

REFS: A. PARIS 33184 (1975) B. NEW DELHI 1492

SUMMARY: QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ASIA (SOUTH ASIA)
LOUIS MOREAU TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE CHIRAC VISIT TO
INDIA WAS MORE FOR A COMBINATION OF POLITICAL REASONS
THAN TO FURTHER TRADE RELATIONS. MADAME GANDHI HAD
TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT THE REASONS FOR HER DECLARING A
STATE OF EMERGENCY, AND CHIRAC CAME AWAY WITH A MORE
SYMPATHETIC ATTITUDE TOWARD HER, AN ATTITUDE WHICH
FRENCH EXPERTS CONSIDERED NOT ENTIRELY WARRANTED. IN
DISCUSSING FOREIGN POLICY, MADAME GANDHI SAID LITTLE
THAT WAS NEW, BUT SHE UNDERLINED INDIAN "INGRATITUDE"
AS UNDERLYING THE INDIAN INDEPENDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD
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THE USSR. FRENCH HERE ALSO CONSIDER THAT VISIT MADE A

SLIGHT CONTRIBUTION TO THE NOT VERY IMPORTANT FRANCO/INDIAN RELATIONSHIP.

1. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ASIA (SOUTH ASIA) LOUIS MOREAU, WHO WAS PART OF THE CHIRAC DELEGATION, DISCUSSED WITH EMBOFF THE RECENT CHIRAC VISIT TO INDIA. MOREAU HAS HAD LONG EXPERIENCE IN INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT AND HAS BEEN HANDLING SUCH AFFAIRS IN PARIS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. HIS ACCOUNT BASICALLY FOLLOWED THAT IN REF B.

2. MOREAU SAID THAT ONE OF THE MOTIVATIONS FOR THE TRIP WAS THAT VISITS TO CHINA AND JAPAN BY PROMINENT FRENCH OFFICIALS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR 1976, AND IT SEEMED ONLY LOGICAL, GEOGRAPHICALLY, THAT THERE BE SOME VISIT ALSO TO INDIA, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE HAD BEEN NO FRENCH VISIT TO RETURN MADAME GANDHI'S 1971 TRIP TO FRANCE. INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE CHATTERJEE IS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE FRANCE THIS YEAR, AND TO CROWN HIS CAREER HE WISHED TO SPONSOR A RETURN VISIT TO FRANCE BY THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER. ALSO, CHIRAC, DURING HIS AUGUST VACATION, READ A POPULAR FRENCH BOOK ABOUT INDIA (CETTE NUIT LA LIBERTE) AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO ACQUIRE HIS FIRST EXPERIENCE OF A EAST OF IRANIATHROUGH A VISIT TO INDIA. (HE IS ALSO SCHEDULED TO GO TO PRC THIS YEAR.) IN ADDITION, THE TRIP TO INDIA GAVE CHIRAC A FOREIGN POLICY TASK WHICH WOULD AUGMENT HIS STATURE AS A POLITICIAN WITH INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS, AN IMAGE WHICH THE 41 JOURNALISTS INVITED TO ACCOMPANY HIM AT GO EXPENSE COULD BE EXPECTED TO CULTIVATE. IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT CHIRAC WOULD DISCUSS WAYS OF EXPANDING FRANCO/INDIAN TRADE, PARTICULARLY FRENCH IMPORTS FROM INDIA, BUT MOREAU NOTED THAT WITH TRADE FIGURES SO LOW, THE POLITICAL REASONS WERE MORE IMPORTANT.

3. INDIAN INTERNAL POLICY. MADAME GANDHI, AS CERTAIN PRESS RELEASES AND REF B INDICATE, DEVOTED A CONSIDERABLE PART OF THE TETE-A-TETE TALK AND LUNCHEON AS WELL AS THE INITIAL FORMAL MEETING TO AN EXPLANATION OF THE REASONS BEHIND THE DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY IN INDIA. MOREAU COMMENTED THAT CHIRAC HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT PREPARED FOR MADAME GANDHI'S PRESENTATION BY WHAT HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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READ IN THE PRESS, BUT HE HAD NOT AVAILED HIMSELF OF QUAI OR FRENCH EMBASSY NEW DELHI EXPERIENCE TO POSE SOME OF THE HARD QUESTIONS IN RESPONSE TO MADAME GANDHI'S VIEWS. THE GENERAL IMPRESSION WAS THAT CHIRAC HAD NOT QUESTIONED MADAME GANDHI'S ASSERTIONS THAT THE CURRENT MEASURES WERE REQUIRED BY THE RECENT EVOLUTION IN INDIA AND WOULD PERMIT A MORE RAPID RETURN TO A FORM OF DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES COMPARABLE TO THAT IN

FRANCE. MOREAU HESITATED TO ASSERT THAT CHIRAC HAD ACCEPTED MADAME GANDHI'S ARGUMENTS AT FACE VALUE, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE HAD COME AWAY FEELING GREATER SYMPATHY WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF THE INDIAN SCENE WHICH, SHE SAID, HAD RENDERED HER ACTIONS NECESSARY. CHIRAC CONCLUDED MADAME GANDHI IS A STATESWOMAN ABOVE THE

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ORDINARY, A PRACTICAL POLITICIAN WHOSE CONCERN WAS NOT LIMITED TO FURTHERING HER OWN PERSONAL POWER. THOSE MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH INDIA HAD NOTED HER RATHER PERSONAL APPROACH TO MANY POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT HER IDENTIFICATION OF HERSELF WITH "MOTHER INDIA" WAS EX-CESSIVELY SUBJECTIVE AND LED TO HER SURROUNDING HERSELF

WITH "YES-MEN". WHILE IT HAD BEEN THE FRENCH POSITION FROM THE START THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FRENCH COMMENT IN THE COMMUNIQUE ON INTERNAL INDIAN POLITICS, MUCH LESS AN ENDORSEMENT OF EXECUTIVE ACTIONS, MADAME GANDHI HAD AT LEAST BEEN ABLE TO GET CHIRAC TO BRING BACK A MORE FAVORABLE IMPRESSION OF HER ACTIONS THAN HAS BEEN PRESENTED IN THE FRENCH PRESS.

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4. FOREIGN POLICY. DURING THE GENERAL PRESENTATION MADAME GANDHI DEVOTED OVER 20 MINUTES TO THE INTERNAL INDIAN SCENE AND BARELY 10 MINUTES TO THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION OF INDIA. SHE ADDED VERY LITTLE TO THE KNOWN INDIAN VIEWS CONCERNING CHINA -- WITH WHICH SHE PROFESSED TO DESIRE FRIENDSHIP -- AND OTHER IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS. SHE NOTED THAT PAKISTAN AND CHINA ALONE SEEMED TO WISH TO DISTURB PEACEFUL EVOLUTION IN THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT AREA. AS FOR THE SOVIET UNION, SHE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE INDIAN TREATY WITH THE SOVIET UNION HAD SPECIFICALLY SUPPORTED THE INDIAN POSITION OF NON-ALIGNMENT. IN THIS REGARD MADAME GANDHI SAID TO THE FRENCH THAT THE INDIANS WERE "WORLD-REKNOWNED" FOR THEIR "PRINCIPLE OF INGRATITUDE". THE FRENCH AND OTHERS SHOULD NOT, THEREFORE, EXPECT INDIA TO BE A SLAVISH EX-POINTER OF SOVIET POLICY EVEN THOUGH SOVIET AID WOULD APPEAR TO DICTATE INDIAN GRATITUDE. MADAME GANDHI SAID THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF DETENTE WHICH HAD BEEN ADOPTED IN EUROPE SHOULD APPLY ALSO IN THE INDIAN AREA. THIS GENERAL PROPOSAL LED TO THE DECLARATION THAT THE INDIAN OCEAN SHOULD BE FREED FROM THE RIVALRY OF THE GREAT POWERS AND SHOULD BE THE CONCERN OF THE RIPARIAN COUNTRIES. THUS A NUCLEAR THREAT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA COULD BE AVOIDED. THE FRENCH WERE STRUCK THAT THIS DECLARATION WAS NOT FOCUSED AT THE UNITED STATES, BUT COULD JUST AS EASILY BE APPLIED TO THE SOVIET UNION. IN ANY CASE THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF THE FRENCH MILITARY FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN IN ANY OF THE FORMAL DISCUSSIONS.

5. ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. MOREAU HAD LITTLE TO ADD TO THE COMMENTS FROM FRENCH EMBOFFS IN NEW DELHI CONCERNING BI-LATERAL ECONOMIC MATTERS. FOR SOME YEARS CHIRAC AND OTHERS IN THE GOVT HAVE FELT THAT FRANCE COULD DO BETTER IN INDIA DESPITE SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES WHICH THE UK HAS AS FORMER COLONIAL POWER. CHIRAC APPARENTLY CAME AWAY CONVINCED THAT THIS WAS INDEED THE CASE AND HE WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO INFLUENCE FRENCH BUSINESS CIRCLES TO THINK MORE POSITIVELY CONCERNING BUSINESS WITH INDIA.

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6. EMBASSY COMMENT. NEW DELHI'S APPRAISAL, REF B, SETS, WE THINK, THE RIGHT TONE CONCERNING CHIRAC'S VISIT. DESPITE SOME EARLIER CONCERN (REF. A) THAT THE VISIT AT THIS TIME MIGHT SHOW AN EXCESSIVE SUPPORT FOR "STATE OF EMERGENCY" POLICIES BY MADAME GANDHI'S GOVERNMENT, THE LOCAL PRESS HAS DEVOTED LITTLE ATTENTION TO THIS ASPECT OF THE TRIP. CHIRAC AND HIS GROUP SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED ANY EFFORTS TO HAVE FRANCE ENLISTED AS SUPPORTING THE INDIAN "EMERGENCY" (PARA 6, REF B) AND THE INDIANS ACCEPTED THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF MADAME GANDHI AND CHIRAC -- PROBABLY AS ELOQUENT AS ANY PARAGRAPH IN THE COMMUNIQUE -- AS BEING ADEQUATE INDICATION OF SUPPORT. IN SUM, THE VISIT CONTRIBUTED TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF INDIA BY A HIGH FRENCH OFFICIAL; AND IT UNDERLINED THE BASICALLY PERIPHERAL NATURE OF FRANCO-INDIAN RELATIONS.

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